

72/2

# Facts & Observations

RELATING TO THE

STATE OF THE WORKHOUSE,

AND

*The* POOR

OF

THE TOWNSHIP OF SHEFFIELD,

*In* 1789.

TENDING TO SHEW THE NECESSITY OF ERECTING

*A NEW WORKHOUSE,*

In a healthy Situation, and at a convenient Distance from  
the Town.

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Pegton

**EFFIELD UNIVERSITY LI:**



PRESENTED BY

**OMAS WINDER**

AND

**ALLEN E. HOWARTH,**

from the Library of

**"the late Mr. JAMES HOWARD"**  
OF SHEFFIELD.

1915.

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## Facts and Observations, &c.

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THE many instances in which the benevolence of the inhabitants of the town of *Sheffield* has been exerted, on a great variety of occasions, afford a well-grounded assurance that no subject which relates to the interests of humanity (and especially if it be connected with the general interests of the town) can possibly be regarded with indifference, if properly submitted to their attention. And yet (to whatever causes it may be ascribed), although schools have been established for the instruction and maintenance of the young, and casual relief is administered with the utmost liberality on all occasions which peculiarly demand the exertions of benevolence, it is nevertheless an undoubted fact, That the condition of the great body of the Poor,---of those whom age, misfortune, or sickness have thrown upon the town for a maintenance,---is certainly such, as loudly to claim the interposition of a wise and benevolent policy to amend.

That the Poor in the SHEFFIELD WORKHOUSE are supplied with good and wholesome food, and in proper quantities---and every attention paid to them which their present condition admits of---is undoubtedly true: But it is equally true that there are many accommodations essential to the *comfort*, the *health*, and even to the *lives* of the Poor, which, to the great regret of every humane person, the present Workhouse is utterly unable to afford them.

With respect to the great principles on which every Workhouse should be established, there is, it is presumed, no difference of sentiment, nor that the following are essential to every well-constituted House of this nature. \*

1st. *That the Poor be allowed all those accommodations which are necessary to their health, and are suited to their respective circumstances.*

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2d. *That*



2d. *That they be employed in such occupations as they are fit for, and are adapted to their condition.*

In conformity with the first of these principles, the Poor ought not to be crowded together in close and unwholesome Bed-rooms, nor should more than *two* persons be obliged to lie in the same bed: but their Rooms should be large enough to admit of a proper circulation of good and wholesome air, and their Beds sufficiently numerous to afford them a convenient and healthful accommodation. The following facts furnish a melancholy proof how little regard can be paid in the Sheffield Workhouse to these important particulars.

The Bed-rooms in general do not exceed four yards by three, in every one of which there are two Beds, containing commonly *four*, and sometimes *six* persons, even in the height of summer. It would really be difficult to believe that a number of persons thus crowded together, in the hottest season of the year, in the midst of unwholesome vapours, and suffering every distress which can arise from heat, and restlessness, and anxiety, could possibly be preserved from disorders of the most malignant nature, did not we know, from the experience of the miserable, that the human frame, when unhappily subjected to such severe trials, is capable of enduring sufferings which in a state of ease and health were not thought possible. But humane and feeling minds will not on that account be the less disposed to relieve to the utmost of their power the miseries of their fellow-creatures, whose unhappy circumstances render them dependent upon their compassion for every human comfort.

As all the Poor are entitled to such accommodations as are necessary to their health; so, likewise, it will readily be allowed that the *virtuous Poor* (particularly those whom age or unmerited distress have reduced to the unhappy condition of owing their subsistence to others) should enjoy every alleviation which their unfortunate circumstances do admit of; some opportunities for pious retire-

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ment, which the vicious should not be suffered to interrupt; some exemption at least (if sometimes it must be endured) from that worst of evils to which the good can be subjected---the unavoidable intercourse and society of the bad! For these distinctions, however important to comfort, to piety, and to good morals, the Sheffield Workhouse affords no opportunities. There are not---because there cannot be---any accommodations for the aged or unfortunate; all are mixed together without distinction, young and old, good and bad, and to circumstances and necessities so widely different, little or no discrimination in the mode of treating them either is or can be applied, than which a greater state of wretchedness, one more abject and humiliating, cannot well be conceived. That they who have lived with comfort and credit in the world, ---whom not their own indiscretions, but the weight of a numerous family, or the pressure of unmerited distress, or the infirmities of advanced age, have compelled to solicit that assistance which in more prosperous times they have probably contributed to others---should find their adversity embittered by such cruel aggravations, and be condemned to endure the licentious intercourse of abandoned profligates, is surely a state which scarcely admits of any farther aggravation of its misery! And yet this is the real condition of numbers of both sexes in the Sheffield Workhouse. But the situation of these aged and unfortunate persons---affecting as it must needs appear to every humane mind---will not perhaps be deemed so truly deplorable as that of *Sick and Dying Persons*, oppressed with pain and sorrow, and destitute of every comfort which might smooth the bed of sickness, and alleviate the burden of affliction. The condition of the Sick needs no aggravation: It is of itself sufficiently afflicting under any circumstances, and has great occasion for every comfort which a kind and affectionate attention can supply. The feelings and miseries, therefore, of the Sick Poor in the Sheffield Workhouse will be readily, though not perhaps

adequately, conceived by every humane mind. Crowded together in close and unwholesome Rooms, with those who can have no sense of or pity for their sufferings; compelled to endure the licentious and obstreperous mirth of youthful and unfeeling profligacy; strangers to that Peace so desirable in their condition, and to that Solitude which would afford them the opportunity of conversing with their God, and of obtaining from HIM support and succour under their heavy afflictions. Even the awful moments of their dissolution are disturbed by the noise and clamour of unprincipled wretches, whom vice has rendered insensible to these solemn scenes!

Little do many worthy and benevolent characters in this town apprehend, that, in a situation which peculiarly is dependent upon their humanity, distresses so exquisite are endured by those whom their benevolence would be forward to supply with every proper accommodation, and for which their assessments are fully adequate; but which in the present Workhouse,---with the greatest solicitude to apply them with humanity and a just discrimination,---the Overseers and Governor are utterly unable to afford them.

The distresses of these two classes---*The Unfortunate* and *The Sick Poor*---cannot fail to excite the most active compassion in their favour. Great, however, and affecting as they undoubtedly are, yet they are not such as necessarily to involve them in guilt and profligacy: And in this respect the Unfortunate and the Sick Poor are in some measure exempted from an evil which seems to be the utmost aggravation of human misery, and which it is the hard and severe lot of those unhappy Women to endure who have been seduced by false professions of affection; in whom the pure and virtuous principles of their minds---although by false and insidious arts overpowered---are not destroyed; who might yet be restored to Virtue, to Peace, and Usefulness; but whom the contagious commerce of abandoned prostitutes completely corrupts

and renders their return to the paths of honour, the affections of their friends, and the duties of society, almost impossible. That any human being should be placed in such unhappy circumstances, as by one false step to be plunged into almost inevitable ruin both of body and soul, is dreadful even in imagination---but yet is the unhappy lot of those unfortunate Females whose indiscretions, often occasioned by treachery and falsehood, have compelled ~~them~~ to seek a miserable refuge in the *Sheffield Workhouse*.

There yet remains another numerous class of sufferers in it whose case is truly deplorable, because they seem destined to inevitable misery and profligacy from the moment of their being brought into it---which with many of them is the moment of their birth: There are at present in the House about 50 *Children*, who may well be termed *The Children of the Public*---for, in general, they have not one friend in the world in the smallest degree interested in their preservation and welfare. It is the custom of the Overseers to apprentice these Children as soon as they are turned the age of seven years; and it is very generally the custom of the most opulent persons in town to avoid the obligation of receiving them into their families, by paying, in lieu thereof, the sum of ten pounds to the Overseers: The consequence is, they are necessarily imposed upon those who are very little able to bear such a burden, and are of course subjected to hard and improper labour, beyond their infant age to endure; and having had no religious principles implanted in their minds, seen nothing but examples of wickedness in their former situation, and experiencing nothing but contempt and hardship in their present, the Boys frequently run away from their service, and---if not enlisted for soldiers--become vagabonds and thieves: The Girls are soon debauched; turn prostitutes; and, in the course of a few years, return again to the Workhouse the victims of Disease and Profligacy, and a burden to the town for the remainder of their lives.

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This account may perhaps appear declamatory to some, but it will appear so only to those who are strangers to the Workhouse---which at present unfortunately contains many such instances.

On the case of these unfortunate Children two remarks ought by no means to be omitted: 1<sup>st</sup>. That the practice of the Overseers, in taking upon themselves the entire maintenance of them, which they always do at the early age of seven years (being what the law does not require of them when the Parent is able to contribute to their maintenance), subjects the Town to an unnecessary and very heavy burden, and relieves the guilty Parent at the expence of many industrious Families, who are little able to bear it. 2<sup>d</sup>. That these Children---concerning whose preservation and happiness there is scarcely any one to interest themselves in the smallest degree---are evidently the Children of the Public; and the Public are obliged by every consideration of humanity, religion, and sound policy, to provide for their education; to take care that such principles are implanted in their minds, and that they be trained up in such habits of regularity and industry, as will qualify them for becoming useful members of society as soon as they are of an age to discharge their proper duties in it. Were such a plan of virtuous institution---which easily might, and certainly ought to be---adopted by the Town of Sheffield in behalf of these destitute Children, many and great would be its happy consequences. 1<sup>st</sup>. The Town would be relieved in a considerable degree from the heavy burden of maintaining them; for they would contribute to their own maintenance by a proper plan of moderate labour. 2<sup>d</sup>. The still greater burden which is inevitably thrown upon the Town by their misconduct, when without principles, or friends to advise and direct them, they are imposed upon a reluctant Master, who has little regard to their moral conduct, and committed to their own management, would be greatly lessened, if not altogether removed. 3<sup>d</sup>. The Children themselves---

hemselves---now doomed to experience nothing but neglect, and scorn, and ill usage, and cast out to associate with the vilest and most profligate persons---would be brought up in virtuous habits; and, unburdensome to any, might live in a state of comfort and usefulness---the Boys till they were of an age to be apprenticed in our manufactories, and the GIRLS till they were fit for some creditable service. To say that the present Workhouse is utterly unfit for such a plan of virtuous education, and proper labour, is certainly offering one of the strongest arguments for the erection of a new one.

These Facts---for so they are, and can easily be authenticated---prove indisputably how little regard is paid, and that because it cannot be, in our Workhouse, to the first great principle on which every Workhouse should be established, *viz.* That the Poor be allowed all those accommodations which are necessary to their health and respective circumstances. How far the 2<sup>d</sup> is attended to *viz.* That the Poor be employed in such occupations as they are fit for, and are adapted to their condition, a few facts will demonstrate.

The usual method of employing the Men is by procuring them work in the manufactures which they have been brought up in; And, when their integrity and industry can be relied upon, there cannot be a fitter method of employing them: But, for want of proper means of punishing dishonesty, and enforcing labour, it frequently happens that only a small part of the wages they receive are brought to the overseers; the false indulgence of their Masters, imposed upon by fictitious tales of distress is sometimes prevailed upon to enable them to deceive the overseers, who in such cases must be contented with what they can get: And when such impositions are not attempted, yet that incitement to labour which is dictated only by a sense of duty, and the trifling recompence of a shilling, cannot be supposed to operate with much effect against those temptations to idleness, which  
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are so extremely powerful in situations where a man does not receive the wages of his own labour, nor is subject to any authority sufficient to enforce his industry. Under such circumstances, no one will imagine that the produce of their labour can be in any degree equal to the just and reasonable expectations of the Town. Whether it would be practicable to employ them to advantage in the Workhouse, by building workshops for that purpose, may perhaps admit of some doubt: But certainly, to discover some method of punishing fraud and enforcing labour, by finding out such employments in the house for the dishonest and the idle, as might be the means of answering both these purposes, is not only practicable, but an object of the very first importance to the inhabitants of the Town; but which can only be accomplished by the building of a New Workhouse.

Of the Women in the house, there are at least sixty capable of work, and who are encouraged to industry by an allowance of one penny for every pound of line they spin; but so little does this encouragement operate in the way that it is intended, so little is it capable of operating, in a situation where all are mixed together, without any Superintendant to enforce that industry which the Town has a right to require from those whom it maintains, if capable of work, that many of them spend their time in a shameful and criminal state of idleness. The attention of the Governess being necessarily occupied in many domestic duties which cannot be neglected, there is no Superintendant in the House, by whose constant inspection regular hours of labour might be enforced, and the idle compelled to work; it ought not therefore to excite the least surprize in the public when they are informed, that they contribute by the Poor Rates to the maintenance of those who will scarcely contribute at all to their own maintenance, altho' as able to do so as most of those from whose honest industry they derive an unmerited subsistence. Excuses to evade labour are easily made, and success-



fully practised by those who are subject to no authority, nor under the influence of any principle; and it is perfectly consistent with the present circumstances of their situation, that many of these women scarcely ever do an hours work before breakfast, some of them not before dinner: After dinner they go to the spinning room, to the great interruption and disturbance of those who are willing to work; and what is a dreadful hardship indeed to a virtuous, altho deserted wife, or an aged and afflicted widow, they are then condemned to hear the licentious tales, the obscene language, which constitute a great part of the conversation of these abandoned women during the hours when they meet to work: Thus therefore the town, for want of a proper Workhouse, maintains in a state of idleness a considerable number of Women, who might and ought to be compelled to maintain themselves, and subjected to such a plan of discipline as would possibly reform some, and restrain at least (if it could do no more) the profligacy of all. These facts, it is presumed, are sufficient to demonstrate, That in the Sheffield Workhouse the Poor neither are nor can be employed so properly as they ought in such occupations as they are fit for, and are adapted to their condition. It appears also to be equally true, that no additions to the present Workhouse, nor any plan of reform of which it is capable, could afford an adequate remedy to the evils now stated. Whilst the Workhouse is continued in the town---whatever enlargements it may receive,---it never can be subjected to proper discipline: For it will be always impossible to prevent that intercourse with the Town which is productive of the most licentiousness. If, therefore, the Morals of the Poor are thought worthy of regard, no considerations of mere convenience, nor opportunities of enlarging the present Building, will be placed in competition with that regularity and sobriety of conduct which cannot be expected in a populous and licentious Town: Neither should the enlargement of the present Building be reconcilable

cileable to a due regard to the health of the Poor, with which it is by no means consistent that they should be confined within the unwholesome walls of a Building situated in a low and populous quarter: Some opportunities must be allowed them for Air and Exercise; and these, instead of being properly used, it is well known, are often applied to the purposes of intrigue, and to all those disorders alike destructive of health and morals, which commonly proceed from the unrestrained intercourse of profligate and unprincipled people: For both these reasons it appears improbable that the Poor will ever be regularly employed in it in such useful labour as they are capable of, and by means of which they might contribute considerably to their own maintenance: If then it be neither practicable to introduce a proper plan of labour into the present Workhouse for the employment of those who are able, therefore ought to be compelled to work, nor of such regular discipline and proper confinement as are necessary to secure the morals of the Poor, and put a stop to the which is acknowledged to be a great evil, the licentious intercourse of its inhabitants, with their acquaintance in the Town---by which opportunities for intrigue, drunkenness, and various impositions, are necessarily afforded them. And who can deny that these are consequences unavoidably attending a Workhouse situated in a populous Town? Then it plainly follows, that to enlarge the present House, which is said to have been in the contemplation of some of the principal inhabitants, would only be to protract these evils, and to extinguish every rational prospect for many years of that remedy to them which there is some reason for believing is generally and instantly desired. If this idea be adopted it will establish for a number of years a plan of management which in great measure will defeat many of the most useful purposes of a Workhouse, regarding neither the employment, the morals, nor (it is to be feared) the health of the Poor in a proper manner.

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Neither is this plan recommended by the principles of a true œconomy: For where can be the œconomy of maintaining the poor without industry? which in such a situation can never be carried on according to any regular and effective plan, nor can it be any thing but a temporary scheme, which the encreasing population of the Town will in the course of some years put an end to, by the unavoidable necessity which most probably will in that time arise for the erection of a new one. There does not, therefore, appear to be any reason whatever for the Enlargement of the present House, but that it is a measure obviously presenting itself to an humane mind on its first view of the subject, as affording present accommodations, and as being easy in its execution: But there is too much cause for apprehension that if unfortunately it should be adopted it will be found a partial remedy applied to a rooted evil, and which like all such remedies will *protract* but not *cure* the disease.

Another motive for adopting the idea of enlarging the present House, seems to be an apprehension, that by the erection of a new Workhouse the Town will be subjected to a present heavy burden. But this inconvenience might entirely be obviated by an application to Parliament to borrow the sums necessary for this important purpose. This would prevent the necessity of laying any extraordinary burden on the Inhabitants; and without subjecting them to a present inconvenience---would enable them to accomplish that plan which is founded on sound principles of œconomy; which has been adopted by many great Towns; and by some with such success, that, in a late publication of one of the Guardians of the Poor of the City of Norwich, it is stated, that, *in the course of three years*, a debt of 5000*l.* has been discharged, and the poor rates reduced from 4 to 3*s.* in the pound. On the other hand, it well deserves the consideration of the inhabitants of this Town, that by agreeing to the plan of an Enlargement of the present Building they will necessarily subject,



subject themselves to a present and probably heavy burden. For nothing in this way can be effected to any useful purpose without an expenditure of many hundred pounds which must be immediately raised by assessment.

It has been sufficiently shewn, that the present condition of the Poor is such, as almost necessarily to produce that idleness, which is extremely injurious to the community that is obliged to maintain them.

But it is not by their idleness alone that the Town is injured. In the present state of the Workhouse, it is impossible for the Governess, by any care or attention, to prevent a great deal of dishonesty in stealing and conveying provisions out of the House: This has been a practice carried on so long, and with such success that it is now formed into a kind of System. The mode is as follows: A fixed price is set on so many shares of meat, bread, cheese &c. But as there is always some danger that the Buyer may be stopped at the door by the Governess, and deprived of their Booty, the price in the House is always low enough to encourage purchasers. If they get clear of the Governess, they find a ready market, and they sell what they have bought for double its price. If they are not so fortunate as to elude her vigilance, then they are obliged to keep the best of provisions till they are utterly spoiled, which is scarcely more to be regretted, than their being sold for pigs, as they commonly are, when conveyed out of the House. It is not so much the injustice that those who pay the poor rates feel so sensibly from such acts of dishonesty, (tho' that must appear very grievous indeed to many poor families, who it is well known are ready to sink under the weight of public burdens) as the painful sensations which good minds necessarily experience from the reflection, that there is so much wretchedness and shocking depravity in their own Town, encouraged and supported by those contributions, which are due only to the necessities of old age, or helpless infirmity. There is another inconvenience which results from the present state

ate of the Poor House much more injurious to the inhabitants than any of those now recited: Altho' it is a policy both humane and wise that poor distressed families should receive that relief they stand in need of, without being compelled to come into the House, and be permitted to exert their honest endeavours for their own maintenance, so long as they are able; yet it is a well known fact that a great number of families receive this assistance, by no means deserving of it, who avail themselves of a knowledge they are fully possessed of, that the House is not large enough for their reception, and therefore are clamorous for assistance which they would not submit to receive in a well disciplined House, whose wise and judicious regulations would enforce that industry and sobriety of conduct, which their bad habits render them extremelyaverse to. From this cause, the burdens of the Town have encreased and continue to encrease with a rapidity fully surprizing, as appears from the following statements.

## Statement of the Out-Pensioners

*From 1777 to 1789.*

		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
77 to 1778	{ Out-pension	715	15	8	}	1010	10 8
	{ Nurse Children	294	15	0			
78 to 1779	{ Out-pension	780	3	10½	}	1065	8 4½
	{ Nurse Children	285	5	6			
79 to 1780	{ Out-pension	895	17	11	}	1211	6 2
	{ Nurse Children	315	8	3			
80 to 1781	{ Out-pension	1049	14	10	}	1382	11 6
	{ Nurse Children	332	16	8			
81 to 1782	{ Out-pension	1179	7	11	}	1536	18 3
	{ Nurse Children	357	10	4			
82 to 1783	{ Out-pension	1244	2	3	}	1560	14 2
	{ Nurse Children	316	11	11			

1783 to 1784	{ Out-pension	1301	4	11½	}	1593	18	6½
	{ Nurse Children	292	13	7				
1784 to 1785	{ Out-pension	1353	16	2	}	1621	14	3
	{ Nurse Children	267	18	1				
1785 to 1786	{ Out-pension	1730	0	11	}	2029	18	8
	{ Nurse Children	299	17	9				
1786 to 1787	{ Out-pension	1840	13	8	}	2168	7	2
	{ Nurse Children	327	13	6				
1787 to 1788	{ Out-pension	1487	9	0	}	1761	11	10
	{ Nurse Children	274	2	10				
1788 to 1789	{ Out-pension	1718	16	4½	}	2029	14	6½
	{ Nurse Children	310	18	2				

Besides the above, there are now three Lunatics at Manchester Infirmary, at 7s. per Week.

It must be confessed that this surprizing encrease of the out pensions is greatly to be ascribed to the encreased state of population: but that they have grown beyond their reasonable proportion, is the unanimous opinion of those who are best acquainted with the subject. To remove this evil entirely, and put a total end to imposition, is what the most sanguine cannot hope for, but to check and controul it to a very considerable degree, is certainly very practicable: And the only method by which so desirable an object can be effected, will be to Build a Workhouse spacious enough for the reception of all who ought to be received into it.

A brief enumeration of those who ought, but cannot be received for a proper length of time into the present Workhouse, will furnish some other arguments for the erection of a new one.

It is much to be desired, that where a poor industrious husband finds his diligent endeavours to maintain his family utterly disappointed by the idleness and extravagance of his wife, the wages of his labour dissipated, and himself exposed to the horrors of a gaol, that instead of being for



ced to desert his family, as is often the case under such unhappy circumstances, or compelled to endure in hopeless misery the wretchedness of such a situation, the Workhouse should afford him protection, and the means of a comfortable subsistence. Such instances are not uncommon, and many who do not chuse to abandon their families which they are both able and willing to maintain, are ready to surrender all the fruits of their labour, and that domestic independence which is so natural an object of every man's wishes, for the security and comfort which the misconduct of their wives will not suffer them to enjoy in their own houses. It would be a wise and humane policy to receive such men and their families into the House; It would be the means of removing much distress, and of relieving the Town from some degree of that burden which is now thrown upon it by the idleness and extravagance of bad wives. But, however wise or humane this policy would be, it cannot be adopted in our present Workhouse. On the other hand, when confirmed habits of drunkenness, idleness, and misconduct render either married or single men a burden to the Town; when the assistance they receive contributes nothing to their real and effectual relief, but only furnishes them the means of continuing in a course of life, miserable to themselves, and burdensome to the Town; in such cases it is much to be wished that these persons could be received into the House, and by a proper plan of discipline and labour, compelled to earn an honest livelihood. This might be effected in such a Workhouse, as is absolutely required by so populous a Township as Sheffield, conducted by such regulations as have been already adopted by many other Towns. At present, great Numbers of idle and disorderly men are enabled in some degree by the assessments, to lead useless, wretched and wicked lives; Their distresses, however occasioned, they well know must be relieved; and as it is the nature of that distress which is the effect of misconduct, to destroy every spark of an independent spi-

rit, and of an honest mind, they feel no sense of shame in owing their maintenance to the labour of other, nor compunctions of conscience, in extorting whatever can be gained by importunity or falsehood; To gain outpensions, and thereby acquire a sort of establishment on the Town for the support of their idleness and misconduct, is what they chiefly aim at; But if they are not so fortunate as to succeed in this great object of their wishes, then they are clamorous for money, cloaths, or whatever is to be obtained by practicing on the humanity or the ignorance of the Overseers. The money or cloaths obtained by such means, are soon made an end of, not unfrequently at the Pawnbrokers; and they only wait for the return of fresh overseers, to repeat again and again the same frauds.

Others of this class will sometimes come into the House because in its present state they find nothing there very repugnant to their accustomed habits and modes of life, and when they have been supplied with cloaths and other necessities quit it at their own pleasure, (a liberty which by no means should be allowed them, were it possible in a House so crowded to refuse it,) and do not return to it again until the appointment of fresh overseers affords them the opportunity of practicing other impositions, and of procuring more cloaths and necessities, to make an end of in the same way with the others. Surely the industrious inhabitants of Sheffield are grossly injured by such fraud and misconduct: And they therefore look up to those whose influence in it gives them the direction of its public concerns, for some redress of their grievances.

That redress they conceive it to be in their power to afford them, by taking proper measures for the erection of a new Workhouse, in which these burdens of an overloaded community should be compelled to contribute by moderate labour to their own maintenance; in which every indulgence necessary to their Health and real comfort should be allowed them, but none for idleness, licentiousness, and the intercourse of others like themselves: In such a House,

regulated

regulated by such a plan of discipline, they hope that some would be reformed, and in due time returned to Society as fit and useful members of it; But if not, yet that their natural aversion to labour, would probably induce them, when liberated from the Workhouse, to employ more diligent endeavours than before, to preserve themselves from a situation in which regular habits of life, and a moral domestic government must be submitted to.

There is another description of persons in this Town to whom the Workhouse might be rendered an asylum, and afford the means of protection, employment, and usefulness, whose numbers are daily encreasing, and whose case calls loudly for attention: The Manufactures of this place affording employment for numbers of young Women, they are taken from the duties most proper to their sex and condition, and rendered in a great measure unfit for the occupations of domestic life. If, therefore, by sickness or the failure of work, or their own misbehaviour, they are thrown out of employment, as they are utterly unfit for service, they have no resource whatever for a subsistence but the poor rates. On these occasions, the overseers must needs experience no little difficulty in determining what is proper to be done.

To allow them a weekly pension, is to maintain them in a state of idleness, and to expose their youth to the most dangerous temptations; and yet still worse must it be, to require them to come into the House and subject them to the contagious intercourse of abandoned prostitutes: serious and good minds will deeply feel the unhappy circumstances of their condition, and all persons will probably soon feel the burden of it, and that to an extent of which at present they have little idea. There are at present several hundred of these young women employed in the various Manufactories of the Town, many of whom are so completely ignorant of the duties proper to their sex and condition, that they cannot make or mend a shirt, or even a pair of stockings. To say nothing of the misery and wretchedness



wretchedness introduced into domestic life, if they marry, by their ignorance, and unfitness for all the duties of it, great must be the burden thrown upon the Town from this cause. Whether it be possible to find out the means of remedying this evil, may perhaps admit of some doubt, altho' it is certainly deserving of the most serious consideration; but to make effectual provision for the reception and employment of those young women, whom sickness, misbehaviour, or the failure of trade have thrown out of their usual employments, is equally dictated by the maxims of true Charity, and of a wise policy.

But this can only be effected properly, by the building of a new Workhouse. Still more urgent and pressing is the case of those unhappy outcasts of society, who are compelled to earn a miserable subsistence by the wages of prostitution; for whose reception and employment in the Workhouse, no proper provision either has been, or can be made; altho' in every well regulated town ever deemed an object of the first importance. When indeed disease and poverty, which are inseparably annexed to their unhappy condition, have overtaken them, then they are forced to seek a temporary refuge in the Workhouse. But as they cannot be suffered to remain longer than is absolutely necessary in so crowded a situation, which is equally destitute of the proper means both of reformation and employment, they are soon turned out again upon the Town, to tempt the inexperience of youth, to ruin the happiness of families, and spread vice and disease without controul. Numbers of these unhappy women are every year discharged from the Workhouse, without any means of obtaining a subsistence but by corrupting the morals and ruining the health of our youth. Perhaps of some of these it may be said, "their poverty and not their will consents," they would be glad of the opportunity of honest labour, or returning again to the paths of virtue & the duties of society; but from these they are almost inevitably cut off, and doomed for ever to contempt and wretchedness; every consideration

consideration of humanity, of policy, and good morals requires a speedy attention to the case of these unhappy women ; to find them the means of honest employment, from receiving of which in private families they are excluded by their unhappy circumstances and to subject them to such regulations of industry, piety, and regular conduct as might in great measure relieve the Town from the burden of maintaining them, and again fit them by a proper course of virtuous discipline, for returning to the common and useful employments of Society ; so great indeed is their present wretchedness, and that of which they are the authors, as to afford of itself no inconsiderable argument, for the erection of a new Workhouse.

The facts and observations here stated, are sufficient it is presumed to establish the following conclusions :

That the Sheffield Workhouse is a scene of distress, of idleness, and profligacy.

That it contains no accommodations for the Sick ; nor proper opportunities of employing the healthy ; nor any effectual means of punishing and restraining the profligate.

That it is supported at an expence which greatly exceeds what would be necessary for the maintenance of a Workhouse, spacious enough, and suitable for every purpose of accommodation, instruction, and employment. That, therefore, no subject more interesting to Humanity, or the general advantage of the inhabitants of this Town has ever been brought before them than this, which is recommended to their attention by the united motives of compassion for the poor, of a due regard to their morals, and of a just and proper policy.







